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HER LOVERS'
FRIEND

NORA PERRY

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HER LOVER'S FRIEND,

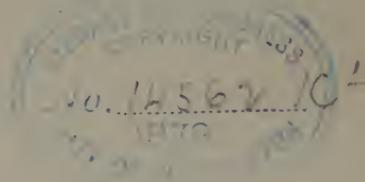
AND OTHER POEMS.

HER LOVER'S FRIEND,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

NORA PERRY.



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HER LOVER'S FRIEND.

LAST night I made a solemn vow
Heaven knows I meant to keep ; and now,
With all my purpose gone astray,
I have no will to say her nay.

What could I say to her in truth ?
What choice have I just now, forsooth,
But straight to serve her at her need ;
For, am I not her friend indeed —
Her friend and his ? Can I forget
Three months ago, when first I met
Her sweet fair face, and heard her say,
“ What, Lawrence's friend ! ” then, half in play,

“His friends are mine, you know ;” and so
We laughed, shook hands, and turned to go
Together down the Roman Hill.
Even as she spoke I felt a thrill
Of newer life, a fresh surprise,
I did not care to analyze.
And she? I was her lover’s friend;
That thought was quite enough to send
A deepening dimple round her mouth.
Since then, now east, now west, now south,
From Venice to the Apennine,
And up the Rhone, and down the Rhine,
I’ve wandered, always at her side,
A sort of walking-stick and guide.
What else was there for me to do
When in this land to her so new,

To me so long familiar grown,
I found her with a chaperone
As inexperienced as herself,
And half the time laid on the shelf
With some neuralgic nerve of pain,
Or mild, mysterious *migraine*;
A brother, too, of scarce more use,—
A boy half wild to make excuse
For some rash venture rashly planned,
To take his pleasure in the land
He knew not of,—what could I do?
Not surely turn and say adieu,
And leave them in this sorry plight.
Besides, I had no need of flight,
It seemed to me, in those first days,
When all her ways I made my ways.

I was her friend, and Lawrence's friend,
To serve her was the natural end
Of such a friendliness as ours:
But when I came to count the hours
That held me from the daily sight
Of her sweet face, I knew, despite
The plausible fine lies I told
Even to myself, that 't was the old,
Old story that had come to me
Three thousand miles across the sea.
Then was the time, I knew, for flight;
But then I had not measured quite
The weakness of my vaunted strength.
I fancied that within the length
And narrow limit of this chain
Of friendship, I could fast maintain

The outward semblance of that state
Of pulseless calm which mocking Fate
Had thrust upon me from the start;
But when I thought I had my part
Complete and sure, my marble mask
Adjusted close, sudden the task
That I had set myself became
A maddening torture, and the flame,
Now held in check, I knew, one day
Would break its bonds and have its way
In wild, swift speech, or wild caress.
This was the end, I felt, unless
I turned and fled; to-morrow night
I had resolved upon my flight,
When comes this message to defeat
My specious purpose, and complete

The irony of mocking Fate,

Which hunts me down like hungry hate.

"Poor Frank;" the message runs, "has met

With serious mischance, upset

At Fiesole, just at the height

Of Badia,—will you come to-night?"

So, pouf! my fine intentions fly

To the four winds of heaven; while I,

Football of Fate again, return

To the sweet Hades where I burn

With untold passion and despair,

Beneath the marble mask I wear;

Until, until some fatal day,

Some fatal hour, I fling away

In one wild moment all disguise,

And stand before her startled eyes

*Myself,—a man whose pulses beat
To madder measures than are meet
For any friendship under heaven
That man hath known or woman given,
Throughout the world, since life began ;
For man is, after all, but man,—
A half-wild creature, held and swayed
By impulses that have betrayed
His vaunted wisdom and his dower
Of manly reason since the hour
He walked in Paradise, and found
The limit of his earthly bound.
And I, like all the race, I stand
Within temptation's border-land,
And cheat myself from day to day
With wild imaginings, that stray*

Far into that proscribed domain
Which is not mine or mine to gain ;
But barred from me by that grim Fate
That I've no power or will — yet wait !
Why cheat myself again ? I know
Too well, too well, that I would throw
This thing that we call honor here —
That all men, nay, that *I've* held dear —
To the wild winds of heaven, or hell,
If I but thought that she — Ah, well !
What mad and futile dream is this,
When with the wicked will I miss
The power to win, — the power to win !
There lies my safety, then, within
That bitter fact. What need have I
To fret and fume, then, if the die

Is thus irrevocably cast,
And all her heart is fixed and fast,
Beyond my reach, beyond my grasp ?
Beyond my reach ! If I should clasp
Her in my arms, and let her know
How all my pulses come and go
For love of her ; — if I should strain
Her once against my breast, I'd gain
My heaven with her, against all ties,
All bonds and bars : — no, no more lies !
No fool's pretense to cheat the spell ;
To-night, at least, 'fore God I'll tell
The truth, — yes, once for all, — now while
I gird myself to meet her smile,
When I shall look upon her face,
And hear her tender voice, and trace

The blind emotion struggling there
Unconsciously and unaware,
And know that at a touch or word
The sleeping princess would be stirred
Within her heart, and all her soul,
Obedient to my control,
Would turn to mine, as turns the flower
Responsive to the mastering power
Of the one sun within the heaven.
And in that moment would be given
Enough of earthly bliss to me
To pay for all the misery
That I have known or yet may know.
Since Fate, then, has forbade me go,
Perhaps the rest is also planned,
Perhaps ordained, that from her hand

I shall grasp boldly all this bliss,
And lose the world within a kiss.

What is it, then, that holds me back ?

What courage is it that I lack ?

Since all the truth I have confess,
What holds me from her tender breast ?

Not honor, my confession shows,
Nor the world's virtue as it goes.

What, then ; what, then ? this only, *love !*

Sometimes it happens that above
The strongest passion man may know,
A stronger power will gain and grow,
And hold him from himself, until
Broken upon its wheel, his will
And greed of sense will lie supine,
Conquered, if not destroyed ; so mine

May broken be, for her sweet sake;
So love may conquer love, and break
Its pride of passion and of power,
Crush all its hopes to save its flower
Of love from any soil or stain,
Or shadow of remorseful pain.

For what new bliss I might inspire
Could shield her from the scorching fire
Of fierce remorse, whose withering flame
Would cast a blight of ban and blame
Upon her tender woman's heart,
That no new passion and no art
That I possessed, could ever quite
Remove and leave her life as white
And clean as in the days before
We met. With God's help, then, one more

Sharp struggle with the demon here
Within my breast, and she, "my dear
And only love," unharmed shall go
Of any word of mine, nor know
What traitor passion has possess't
In friendly guise, her own sweet breast.

FOR THE KING.

THIS is the way my hair was fixt

The night, that night I danced with the king,—

Curl over curl, and in betwixt

The piled up mass, a slender string

Of ruby beads running like fire

Against my night-black clouds of hair.

And my dress,—oh, I danced in silk attire,

And the king looked down, and called me fair !

Full twenty years ago since then,—

And such a life-time in between

Of loves and hopes and hates ; yet when,
Just now, "He is dead," they said, that scene

Sprang all at once from under the dust
Of the crowded years, and plain as day,
I saw the king — my king there, just
As he stood on that night, away

In that far back, beautiful time,
When the world was young, and happy, and
fair ;
And I saw myself all in my prime,
With the ruby beads in my night-black hair.

A big brave king was this king of ours
From first to last. Oh, my father knew,

He knew how he fought the Austrian powers

At Novara there, when the bullets flew

Like fiery hail, to Italy's cost.

And how at the close of the day he swore,
On the battle-field so hardly lost,

Shaking his sword wet red with gore,

To make Italy free from end to end.

Oh, my father knew, and we all know now,
That he meant what he said, to be Italy's
friend,

And to keep to the last his kingly vow.

And how he has kept it, well we know —

The people of Italy who were ground

Under the tyrant foot of the foe,
Or fast in priestly tyranny bound.

One by one he has shaken free
The shackles that fettered us, till we stand,
From shore to shore of lake and sea,
A peaceful and united land.

A big brave king from first to last,
But never a courtier ; that was a part
For which our soldier was not cast
By nature's mould or worldly art.

But an honest man, that was the name
From first to last he had rightly earned ;
And men less honest to their shame,
Courtiers living the life he spurned,

Of smooth deceit, that never spared
Maid or wife in their mad pursuit,
Whispered what they had never dared
Boldly speak for the king's dispute, —

That, coarse of fibre, and coarse of grain,
His pleasures were those of a roystering
groom.

This was the measure, and this the strain,
Of the gossip that found the breadth and
room

Of palace and court to fester in.

But we, the people with whom they said
He spent his moments of roystering sin,
We knew him sound of heart and of head,

And that where he went no withering flame
Followed his feet and marked the way ;
No innocent creature owed her shame
To a king who stooped to kiss and betray.

I was the beauty of the town,
When he danced with me at Piedmont
there,
And much too vain, alas, to frown
At the flattering tongue that called me
fair.

And I cannot tell what might have been,
Or where my feet had gone astray,
If this hero king had stooped to win
My foolish heart ere he went his way.

But not a word he said to me
Could have made my mother's heart afraid,
Though' his soldier's speech was blunt, and
free
Of flattering praise for the little maid

Who looked at him with worshiping eyes
Beneath her night-black clouds of hair.
Oh, mother of God, to think of the lies
They have told of him who could shelter and
spare

A foolish, innocent heart like this,
Ready to follow wherever he led,
And barter the world for a royal kiss !
Oh, when Italy judges her royal dead,

Let her think of this record a woman can bring
To add to his score; then crown him once
more

As Italy's hero and Italy's king,
From the heights of Savoy to Sicily's shore.

THE FAMOUS FREE-LANCE.

(REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIFTH.)

FIVE centuries and more ago,
When English Edward at Bordeaux
Flung back upon the proud French king
His bold reply of threatening
To the imperious French demand,
He little recked that all the land
At sound of the usurper's threat
Would then and there forswear, forget,
Their wild contentions, and unite
For France alone in his despite.
But from his vantage-ground the king
Said to his heralds, "Go and bring

My Breton soldier to me here,
Bertrand Du Guesclin, who is dear
To every loyal heart in France;
Go bring him here, my bold free-lance.”
And when he came, this Breton chief,
Whose sword had won broad lands in fief
Throughout the valley of the Seine,—
Restored to France her own again,—
The king, amidst his nobles there,
Turned with a smiling, gracious air
Of gracious greeting to Bertrand,
And said, “Du Guesclin, from my hand
I pray you take my royal sword,
And ’gainst the usurper’s ruffian horde
Fight for your king, my brave free-lance,
Henceforth as Constable of France.”

Red rose the blood of swift surprise
To Bertrand's cheek. "Ah, sire!" he cries,
"I am not fit, a rough free-lance,
Above these gentlemen of France
To take my rank." But, as he spoke,
From all the assembled throng there broke
A hearty cheer for *Lord Bertrand,*
The chosen soldier of the land!
So, sped alike by prince and king,
He put aside his faltering,
This modest Breton chief, whose name
Already rang with warlike fame;
And buckling on his sovereign's sword,
Rode forth against the invading horde,
With fifty thousand men-at-lance,
The flower and chivalry of France.

All Europe rang with his renown
When, conquering hero, he rode down
To storm and take the rebel band
That held Auvergne's fair border-land.
High beat the French king's heart with pride.
“What may not France become,” he cried,
“With brave Du Guesclin for my sword
Against the whole usurping horde!”
Ev'n as he spoke, with eyes that glowed,
Into the palace court-yard rode
A breathless herald for the king.
“What news,” the king cried, “do you bring
Of fair Auvergne?” “’Tis ours, my liege.”
“Ha, ha!” the king laughed; “and the siege,
How sped the siege?” “The siege sped well.”
“And Lord Bertrand?” “O sire, he fell

When all was won, and at the gate
Is lying now in mournful state.
His last words, sire, to those who bent
Above his couch, before he went,
'Remember, comrades, when you stand
A hostile force in any land,
The women, children, and the poor
Are not your foes.' " Low to the floor
The herald bowed before the king,
His message ended. " Go and bring
My hero here," the sovereign said,
In faltering tones,— " my hero dead ;
And write above his silent breast,
'Here lies the bravest and the best,
The truest gentleman of France,—
Bertrand Du Guesclin, the free-lance.' "

FROM A CONVENT.

How the sun shines to-day down the long,
busy street,

That I cannot see, where I cannot meet
Beneath its glad glow the faces I know—
God ! to think it is only a swift year ago

I looked on those faces that smiled back at
me,

As I walked there or rode there as idle and
free

As they are to-day — to-day, while I pine,
Shut out from their life in this prison of mine.

“Shut out from their life of the world and its
evil,

From temptation and sin, the flesh and the
devil,”

Drones the priest at confession, the abbess at
prayer,

While I listen uncomforted, dumb with despair.

Then back to my duties, the weary routine
Of petty dull cares, which they think is to
wean

My passionate heart from its folly and sin,
Purge my soul of the lusts of the flesh, win

My slumbering soul to repentance and shame
Of this stubborn wild will, till spent like a
flame,

I lie at their feet, who once looked above
Their sordid dull earth, when I looked at my
love !

My love ! when he held me that night on his
breast,

When he lifted my face there and prest
His warm kisses to lips that returned
Every kiss with a heart throb, I learned

More of heaven than the priest can reveal
In a million confessions, or the abbess can
feel,

Though she weary the saints with her prayers !
And that night — that night down the parapet
stairs,

When Pietro the spy led them on to discover
Our trysting-place there, was I shamed for my
lover

Or the love that I felt? Oh! Leonardo, Leo-
nardo,

When you leapt to your feet and facing the
foe

Held me closer and closer, while you flung in
their teeth

The base words that they spoke, my fond heart
beneath

Its swift shock of terror gave one throb of de-
light!

And Leonardo, Leonardo, my love, on that
night

Mounted higher and higher, rose to heaven
like a flame,

This love which they dare call my sin and my
shame.

Shame! if twelve months before they had met
us, we two

By the parapet stairs, and all of them knew

We were lovers as now, do you think they 'd
have spurned

Us like that? No, my uncle, the abbé, had
turned

On his heel with a smile, and a word it may
be

Of reproof for the hour, nothing more, and
we,

Half abashed, half elate, had loitered behind,
Well aware by that smile that you'd find
More smiles than reproof on your suit.
Ah, why was the future so mute?

Why, when the gods beckoned on, did we linger and wait,

Playing lightly with love, while our fate
Lurked grimly and dark overhead?

Why at that hour had no warning voice sped

Straight to our blind, sleeping souls, waked us
there

From this trance that has wrought our despair?

But no; while coy and coquettish I turned
All your earnest to jest, though I yearned

Out of sight for the day or the night
That would bring me again the delight
Of your glance or the touch of your hand,
The Duke, riding by, saw me stand

Looking down from the balcony there
That fronts to the street — and he saw I was
fair !

Then he came with his suit, and we woke from
our trance,
Dropped our masks of gay jest, and you spoke ;
but what chance

Had your name, Leonardo, against a Duke's
name,
Your love suit against a Duke's noble claim ?

What chance had my prayers or my tears when
a crown

'Twixt these prayers and these tears glittered
down

On their sight? When Church and the State
Could be served, what mattered my love or my
hate?

My hate! when it dawned on me then all they
meant

By their smooth lying words, I seemed to re-
lent

From that day, merged my passion in duty,
Donned the Duke's ring, and smiled when he
flattered my beauty —

Tricked them all, Leonardo! matched their cunning and guile

By *my* wit, *my* craft over theirs — the wile

Of a woman 'gainst the fine priestly art

Of the abbé's — 'gainst his cool, clever head,
my heart,

Which won and still won, gained time for us
there

To count up our chances of hope or despair,

To plan 'twixt our kisses a sudden bold flight

To Palermo; then over the sea, where no right

Of abbé or priest could divide us, made one

'Neath the eagles of France. But Pietro, base

son

Of the basest of traitors — Pietro the spy
Proved his false, evil blood. God ! with heaven
so nigh
That a devil like that had the power
To change our heaven to his hell in an hour !

Our heaven ! Oh, Leonardo, Leonardo,
Do they think in this prison I'll learn to
forego
This heaven ? In these walls to lose and forget
The warmth of your love ? Fools, I will baf-
fle them yet,

Find my way to your arms ere another year
goes.
Ah, Leonardo, it must be ; God would not im-
pose

This long death in life in this prison for *me* !
Only twenty last year, youth's blood strong
and free

In my veins, youth's fire at my heart !
Oh, Leonardo, Leonardo, *we* to part,
We to wait for that world we know not, when
this
Lifts up to our lips the full measure of bliss !

LADY WENTWORTH.

“SHE shall marry me yet,” he smiling said—
Smiling, and under his breath — but red
As flame his dark cheek glowed, and bale-fire
burned

In his passionate eyes, as he swiftly turned

Out of the sunshine into the shade—
Out of the sunshine she had made
But a moment before — this girl with a face
Whose very frown had a winsome grace,

They used to swear, in that old, old time,
When her beauty was in its wonderful prime,

When her laughing eyes, of golden brown,
Were the toast and rage of Portsmouth town,

Of Hampshire's Portsmouth, there by the sea,
Where the Wentworths ruled and held in fee
Half the country side of rock and shore,
For a hundred and fifty years or more.

“She shall marry me yet!” ’Twas the Went-
worth blood

That rose up then in that turbulent flood,—
The Wentworth purpose that under his breath
Would hold to its passionate will till death.

“She shall marry me yet!” And down he
strode
Across the pathway, across the road,

With a firm, quick step, and a firm, quick heart,
To work his will and to play his part.

And a difficult part it was to play,
For the Wentworth blood ran either way,—
His mother's blood that held him tied
By kinsman bonds on either side.

But as mother's blood leaves stronger trace
Than father's blood in a turbulent race,
It may have been that his willful way
Had the stronger current to move and sway.

At all events, as the months wore on,
And no tidings came from her Cousin John,
To the beautiful toast of Portsmouth town,
The Wentworth temper rose up to drown

The passionate Wentworth love in her breast,
And the Wentworth pride helped on the
rest :

And six months after her laughing scorn
Of her dark-eyed suitor, suing forlorn,

She stood by his side one autumn day,
A beautiful bride : he had won his way ;
But the gossips said that a bride never wore
In Portsmouth town such a look before.

Seven years after John Wentworth came
Back to his home with a foreign fame :
Back he came to rule and to reign,
As the Wentworths had ruled and ruled
again,

From father to son, in Hampshire State.
Seven years after: why he tarried so late—
So late and so long in a foreign land—
Was a riddle not easy to understand.

Yet late as he came, a welcome burned
In a hundred hearth-fires. Wherever he turned
A hand stretched out and a smile awaited
This kinsman of theirs so long belated.

But amid this lavish neighborly cheer
He missed a face he had once held dear.
“My Cousin Frances: where doth she hide?”
He questioned at last. “She watches beside
A sick man’s bed: a good nurse, I should say,
To keep the blue-devil bailiffs away.”

That night John Wentworth knocked at the door
Of his cousin's house. A foot on the floor,

A whisper of silk, and there she stood.

In that moment John Wentworth's cousinly mood
Melted away like frost at the fire.

He thought he had killed the old desire;

He thought that love and hate both lay

Slain by the past at that long late day;

He thought — but what matters it now

The thought that *had* been, when on cheek and
brow

Flames the signal torch from his wakened heart?

What matters it now the cousinly part

He had fancied was his, when his pulses beat
With that swift, wild throb, as their glances
meet?

But he curbed the Wentworth temper awhile,
As he bent in greeting, and hoped, with a smile,
That he found her well. Hearing the state
Of her goodman's health, he could not wait

His cousinly sympathy to convey.

A tedious illness he had heard them say ;
But the town was eloquent of her care,
Which had certainly left her no less fair

Than he remembered her seven years since —
He turned a moment as he saw her wince —

Turned, and with a purpose fell,
In a sneering, passionate tone, "Ah, well !

"Women, we know, have a potent charm
To ward themselves from trouble and harm."

She caught the sneer, and stayed him there,
With a passionate cry : how did he dare,

Who had played so falsely these seven long
years,

To fling at *her* feet his idle sneers ?

"*I* false !" He laughed. "Madam, where went
Those fine love-letters I foolishly sent

"Across the seas in those old, old days ?
I waited long — 'tis a pretty amaze

You feign, my cousin — I waited long
For a word or a sign, for my faith was strong

“In that old, sweet time ; but the months went
by,

And never a line came back, and I
Still clung to my faith, till a morning in May
There came to me news of a wedding-day

“Here in Portsmouth town, and the bride
Was the girl who had stood at my side
And sworn to be mine six months before—
You shiver, my cousin : the wind from the shore

“Blows harshly to-night.” A gesture here
Checked his bitter reproach his menacing sneer,

And a hoarse voice cried, "John Wentworth,

wait

Ere you dower me with the dower of hate.

"No letter of yours from over the sea

In that old, old time came ever to me;

Day after day the months went by—

Day after day, and what was I

"But a maiden scorned? Day after day

The months went by; when I heard them say

That John Wentworth stayed

To woo and win an English maid,

"My spirit rose like our swift shore tide—

'Twas the Wentworth temper, the Wentworth

pride—

And — your cousin and mine had wooed me
long :

His love was sure and my hate was strong —

“ Quick, passionate hate for the suitor fine,
The false, false gallant who over his wine
Could pledge new loves while the old love
waited,
Faithful and fond, this lover belated.”



“ Sweetheart ! ” Back she started in swift af-
fright
At this fond, bold cry, and the red turned
white

In her oval cheek. A moment more,
And swiftly striding across the floor,

This lover belated, who missed his bride
Seven years ago, is at her side ;
And the fond, bold voice on her listening ear
On her listening heart, over every fear,

Like a rising river, gains and gains,
While unreckoned, unheeded, the swift night
wanes,
Till the clock strikes twelve on the landing
stair ;
Then John Wentworth turns with a gallant air,

And embraces his cousin as a kinsman may,
Though all the gossips be looking that way.
Yet his parting words, whispered low in her ear,
Were never meant for a gossip to hear.

But long before the spring had come
To Portsmouth shores, in many a home
The gossips' tongues were making bold
With the Wentworth name; and the story told,

Which ran through the town like a breath of
flame,

Was this: that John Wentworth never came
To his cousin's house but by signal or sign,
A silken scarf or a kerchief fine

Flung out of the casement, or at night
In the western window a candle's light.
And the gossips, observant, would smile, and say,
"So! the sick man sleeps at this hour of the
day!"

Or at evening, when the candle flares
In the western window, "Dame Frances' cares
Are over early, it seems, to-night."
If Dame Frances caught this bale and blight

Of the gossips' tongues, little she recked:
No Wentworth yet was ever checked
By a gossip's tongue, however bold.
But there comes a day when the kerchief's fold

Is missed at the casement, and that night
No candle flares its signal light.

When another morning dawns again
The tolling Portsmouth bells explain

The missing candle, the kerchief fine.
Dame Frances now of signal or sign

Has little need ; in the chamber there,
Where a sick man yesterday claimed her care,

A dead man lies in solemn state ;
And peering at the linen and plate
Down stairs, the neighbors, under their breath,
Talk of the sick man, and his death ;

Of the widow's prospects ; and one more bold
Hints that ere the year's grown old
The Wentworth mansion across the way
Will have a mistress fine and gay.

But ere a month had passed of the year,
All the seamstresses far and near,
In and out of Portsmouth town,
Were sewing fast at a wedding-gown

Of brocaded satin, foreign and rare,
For dame Frances Atkinson to wear.
“Shame!” cried the gossips, far and wide,
And “Shame!” cried the Wentworths in their
pride —

All the Wentworth kin in Hampshire State.
This haste was unseemly; she’d only to wait
In her widow’s weeds a year and a day,
And not a gossip could say her nay.

Then up she spoke, this willful dame —
Scornfully spoke, with a tongue of flame:
“Seven years I have served the Wentworth
pride;
Seven years with a Wentworth courage lied

“To the world with my smiling face,
To find at the end — no sovereign grace
To save my soul, but a curse alone,
The curse of a lie that shamed my own !

“Cheated and tricked seven weary years,
Won by a lie — no lying tears
Have I to waste, no time to wait
On the man who dies seven years too late !”

Scared and shocked the Wentworths stared
At this reckless dame, whose passion dared
To cast at the dead man, scarcely cold
In his fresh-turned grave, these accusals bold.

Scared and shocked, but never a word
Of ban or blame was ever heard

From their lips again, and come the day
When my Lady Wentworth, fine and gay,

Reigned in the Wentworth mansion there,
Not a gossip in Portsmouth but spoke her fair.
But under their breaths, when twilight fell,
Under their breaths, they would sometimes tell

The old, old story of signal and sign,
The candle flame, and the kerchief fine;
And under their breaths would croak a fear
That my lady had lent but too willing an ear

To the evil whispered against the dead, -
The doubtful tale so suddenly sped
From mouth to mouth, while for yea or nay,
Helpless and dumb the dead man lay.

But never upon my lady's face,
Never a doubt showed sign or trace,
As she looked the curious gossips down
In the little world of Portsmouth town —

Never a doubt from year to year,
Never a doubt, and never a fear ;
For whatever the truth of the troubled past,
My lady had come to her own at last !

THE KING'S KISS.

“ How long,” he asked, “ will you remember
this —

How long ? ” Then downward bent
His kingly head, and on her lips a kiss
Fell like a flame — a flame that sent
Through every vein
Love’s joy and pain ;

“ How long,” he asked, “ will you remember
this ? ”

“ How long ? ” She lifted from his breast a
cheek
Red with her sacred love,

Yet when her redder lips essayed to speak,
And when her heart did move
To answer grave and sweet,
Somehow a smile unmeet
Broke waywardly across red lips and cheek.

“How long, how long, will I remember this?
Say *you*,” she murmured low —
“Say *you*” — and while she trembled with her
bliss,
That smile went to and fro
Across her flushing face,
And hid a graver grace —
“Say *you*, how long will you remember this?”

He bent above her in that moment's bliss,
He held her close and fast;

"How long, how long, will I remember this?
Until I cross at last,
With failing, dying breath,
That river men call Death—
So long, so long, will I remember this!"

But, when apart they stood, did he remember
His words that summer day?
Did he remember through the long December
The warmth and love of May,
The warmth, and love, and bliss,
The meaning of that kiss,
When kingdoms stood between—did he re-
member?

Ah! who can say for him? For her we know
The king's kiss was her crown;

For her we know no agony of woe,
No other smile or frown,
Could make her heart forswear
That summer morning there,
Beneath the forest trees of Fontainebleau.

BARBARA.

THERE's her picture, hanging on the wall,—
Copley's work, a century ago ;
See the grace with which that silken shawl
Droops from off the shoulders' rosy snow !

See the carriage of that haughty head ;
See the latent scorn in those dark eyes ;
Only the mournful mouth of blossom red
All the haughty splendor soft belies.

“My Lady Barbara” they called her then ;
'T was in the old gay days of George's reign.

My Lady Barbara ! In the eyes of men
No fairer beauty ever breathed disdain

From lovely lips or scornful, radiant eyes ;
Yet all her beauty brought no dower but pain,
For all her beauty could not win the prize
That she had staked her hope of heaven to
gain.

She laughed at love and lovers till *he* came,
And laughed the more, and flung her idle threat
Of idle scorn, when others spoke his name,
And said, " My haughty lady 'll get

" Her match if not her master here."
Her scornful, laughing threat rang up and
down,

And where he rode or feasted met his ear;

And where he rode or feasted though the
town

She held aloof awhile with cunning guile.

He gave no sign; a stranger in the place,
He rode and feasted, gave back smile for
smile.

One night he smiled upon *her* waiting face,

Then bent a moment, looked and smiled again.

Low laughed she under breath: "So this
is he

Who conquers women's hearts, this startled
swain,

Whose heart is in his eyes, 'tis clear to see."

“ Whose heart is in his eyes ” — and thinking
this,

She gave him smile for smile, and glance for
glance.

He came at her command ; she did not miss
His presence day or night, at feast or dance.

What was it that she missed as time went by !

What was it that she sought and sought in
vain,

In soft and courtly phrase, and glance of eye ?

What was it that she missed and could not
gain ?

“ His heart is in his eyes,” she’d lightly said,
And left unsaid the vow to win and wear ;

And looking in those eyes, her own heart bled,
And broke at last with love's despair.

Her master, not her match, she'd found indeed ;
And, like the fair, fond women Shakespeare
drew,

She flushed and paled with love, and gave no
heed

That all the jeering town her passion knew.

No vision of the truth pierced through her
pride,

Till winter came and went, and spring was
nigh ;

He but delayed, she thought, to seek a bride,
His reverent love ranked over-high.

And, dreaming thus, poor sweetheart, fell the
blow,

And half the town stood staring at the sight :
'T was at the Province House, beneath the glow
Of festal lamps one festal night.

High beat her heart beneath her bodice-belt ;
Her cheek was like the rose, her eyes
Like stars, triumphant, fond, as if she felt,
“ To-night, to-night, my beauty wins the
prize ! ”

A moment thus she stood superbly fair,
An image of exultant youth and grace,
That seemed to say, “ With time and care
I have no part nor place.”

Then all at once a whisper met her ear :
“Look ! there he comes, his sweetheart on
his arm,
The girl from over seas.” She turned, without
a fear,
Without a thought of coming ill or harm,

This proud, unconscious Barbara, to see
Whose sweetheart was so trumpeted by
fame,
And she not know ; she turned to see
His face — his cruel, splendid face — that
came

Between her soul and heaven : his face
Bent smiling down, smiling and fond

To seek another face, not hers ; another face —
Good God ! was this the sweetheart from be-
yond

The seas they'd whispered of ? No, no, 't was
chance —

Some fool had blundered ; this was she
Of whom the provost's wife had spoke, her
guest from France,

Late come, to find herself unknown, and
he

In kindness, like a gallant knight,
Paid his devoirs in courteous word and deed,
His gentle service, as a gallant might
To serve a stranger's need.

And with the thought a smile across her face
Flashed lightning-like ; for there he came,
This gallant knight, with sudden, hastening
pace,

And smiles to meet her own. Like flame,

Her cheek, that had been pale with pain, now
burned ;

Like flame, her fierce heart leaped with love
and pride :

“Mine ! mine !” her eyes declared. He touched
her hand, then turned

To her who hung upon his arm. “My bride,

“Come Easter-morn,” he said ; “a stranger here,
Brought by her kinsman to my waiting love ;

If Lady Barbara, whose welcome cheer
I know so well, would welcome *her*, above

“All favors would a bridegroom prize”—

Here all at once a smothered sound
Broke off his silken speech of lies ;
And cries of “Coward ! caitiff ! hound !”

Rang down the room ; and Barbara stood
Incarnate Hate, who but a little space
Ago was Love’s ideal womanhood.

Thus for a moment gloomed her face,

And, like the caitiff she had named him there,
He shrank beneath her withering word and
look.

Not this the triumph he had planned with care,
Not this the end, this mighty wrath that
shook

And swayed the throng, till men — ay, those
whose suit
She'd laughed to scorn in other days —
Turned judge of him, as there he cowered,
mute,
Before the lightning of her speech and gaze !

The very air seemed full of menace then,
Of muttering thunder, soon to break and
fall
In storm upon his recreant head ; when,
Almost as she spoke, they saw her tall,

Straight figure sway and bend, her eyes grow
dim ;

And, ere a hand could reach to save, she fell,
A senseless heap, prone at the feet of him
Whose mocking love had turned her heaven
to hell.

Then for a moment all the throng lost sight
Of aught but that still semblance lying there,
And only when they saw returning light
Of life upon her face they whispered, “Where

“ Is he, this coward, who has fled before
His dastard’s work ? ” Ay, where was he ?
Not then, not there, nor ever any more
They saw his cruel face : across the sea

That very night, with her whom he that night
Proclaimed his bride, come Easter-morn,
He fled away. That very night,
Indifferent of all her scorn,

Dead to revenge, forgetting hate,
In blessed trance poor Barbara lay,—
In blessed trance that seemed to wait
From hour to hour, from day to day,

Until a day rose dim with rain,
An April day, chill and forlorn;
Then broke the trance, and out of pain
She slipped from earth—on Easter-morn !

A TRAMP.

HIS STORY.

TRAMP? Yes, I'm a tramp, and one of the
worst of the kind,

Thinks my lady who peers at me there through
the bars of her blind,

As I lounge in the shade of the tree here, and
greedily munch

The broken bread-crusts which she'd airily call
my lunch.

My lunch! That sounds well to a man who
for forty-eight hours

Has n't broken his fast until now — now, while
he devours

The broken bread-scrapS that stick in his starv-
ing throat,

Which he cools now and then, as my lady
takes pains to note,

From a rummy old flask, which she thinks she
can smell

From behind her blind-bars, as the vintage of
hell.

She'd never believe, though I poured it out at
her feet,

That it was only a draught of the ale that
Adam found sweet.

How her impulse of charity chills at this vil-
lanous sign,

While, through the window below, on the side-
board carven and fine,

I can see the decanters filled with old Madeira
and sherry,

For respectable lips to drain, till the wits grow
mellow and merry!

Well, my lady, I wonder what you would
say,

If I should rise in my rags, and tell you that
in my day

I had toasted as fair as you in wine of the
choicest and best,

And been of the rich and the gay a courted
and flattered guest?

Believe me? No, you'd turn with scorn from
my tale,

And send for the nearest police to lodge me
in jail

For a lying vagrant and nuisance, plying the
trade

Of a swindler for the chance of a theft to be
made.

And the police: I can see my gentleman's
face

As the story is told—a tramp is a tramp, all
base

Through and through, a bundle of rags and of
lies,

One begetting another, both stripped clean of
disguise

In that sharp professional sight on the watch
for a thief.

And I can hear my gentleman's voice, curt with
unbelief,

As he stabs me here and there with a question
or two :

*Yes, a curious story, indeed, if it chance to be
true !*

*But men so high in the world would n't let an
old comrade dine
On beggarly crusts ; they'd feast him on wood-
cock and wine !*

Would they ? Ah, my professional friend !
Your wisdom is not of this world of "the
upper West End."

Of crime and of vice you 've a knowledge far
beyond mine ;

But of the friendship that lavishes woodcock
and wine

On the man who's at odds with Fortune and

Fate,

A poor, shabby devil without worldly estate,

Who has once been as high as now he is
low,

I think I may venture to swear that I know
All the ins and the outs; and the outs, let me
say,

By a heavy majority carry the day!

But 't was never the way of the world to look
back

For the unfortunate rider who slipped in the
track;

Once down, he may scramble to foot as he can;
But the chance is, once down, that a luckier
man

Closes in to the line and fills up his place,
And he finds ere he knows that he's out of
the race.
So I slipped from the track, and the world
doubtless thinks
Lost the race like a coward who shivers and
shrinks
From the brunt of the battle, sneaking out of
the strife,
For the shameless, sweet sloth of the vag-
bond's life.
Oh, my world ! so you judge from your fine,
airy height
Of respectable sin, the poor luckless wight
Who has lost in the race and drifted below
Your chariot-wheels. God ! what do you know

Of the straits men may come to when flung to
the wall,

Out of pluck, out of pocket, — in short, stripped
of all

That can give a man reason or courage to face
His fellows once more in the heat of the
race !

You to talk in that virtuous, copy-book way
Of the certain rewards that are sure to repay
Honest worth and endeavor; you to preach
and to prate

As you sit at your ease high in church and in
state

Of adversity's uses and poverty's gains !

Oh, my world ! let me say, as a fool for your
pains,

And a selfish old braggart, you 'll rank with the
best ;

While I — well, I sat with you once as your
guest,

And I know you, my world, for your wisdom
was mine

In those days when we feasted on woodcock
and wine.

But since then I have tasted a vintage that
brings

A wisdom denied to courtiers and kings !

'T is the vintage that 's grown from the vine
we may call

The vine of experience, and bitter as gall

It has shown me the folly of faith here below

In those fine little saws and proverbs that glow

Like a coal from the altar of heaven till the day
That we bring them to bank with their prom-
ise to pay.

There's that one about honest worth and en-
deavor,

With its certain rewards. Well, perhaps I'm
not clever

At counting rewards; perhaps I should find
My reward in my conscience, and thus go it
blind.

But though I have kept this conscience as fair
Perhaps as my lady who peers at me there,
I am not of that sort of ethereal stuff
To sup on a conscience and find it enough.
Yet no epicure's feast do I hanker for now,
But that promise fulfilled, "By the sweat of
thy brow

Shalt thou eat." A curse, yet a pledge, there
it stands,

To crumble and fall at the touch of my hands,
Like the fine little proverbs I mouthed in the
days

When, a fool, I fancied I knew all the ways
Of life and the world. Good God! did I know
That one day I should wander like this to and fro
Through the breadth of the land, a man with-
out stain

Of a crime, seeking vainly that toil that shall
gain

The bread and the breath of his life, his place
Once more among men, a chance to lift up his
face

Unashamed to the light of the heavens, and the
gaze

Of the curious world, from whose open highways
He has shrunk step by step in his terrible straits,
With the demon of Death and Despair that waits
For its prey, beckoning on and still on day by
day ;

While afar, in the life I had left, in the open
highway

Of the world, men, my fellows, a brief space ago,
Sitting snug in high places, well fed, and aglow
With that wisdom that carries the fool's cur-
rent stamp,

Set their dull wits to solve *that problem the*
tramp !

Not a man like themselves, but a "creature," a
"thing,"

A nuisance to legislate over, and bring

To the test of the law, by which shall abide
This "creature" and "nuisance," they calmly
decide.

So you gather us up, so you measure us all,
A bundle of tares, nothing else. O Saul
Midst the prophets! O fool deaf and blind!
While you fashion your laws for *men*, not *man-*
kind,
I, out of your world, ask myself if the Man —
The Man we call Christ — would have followed
your plan?

SWEET SIXTEEN.

“ You think the world is only made
For you and such as you,” he said.
Laughing aloud in boyish scorn,
Of boyish mirth and mischief born.

She never turned from where she stood
Prinking her little silken snood
Of silken curls before the glass ;
She never turned to see him pass,

Nor answered him, save with a laugh
That half confessed his boyish “ chaff.”
But left alone, confronted there
With her own image fresh and fair,

A sudden blush lit up her face
With newer youth and fresher grace,
And eyes that were demurely fixed
A moment since, with thought unmixed,

Upon the smoothing of a tress,
Now sparkled soft with consciousness ;
“Why not, why not ?” she lightly cried,
Out of the gay exultant pride,

The sweet wild insolence of youth ;
“Why not for me, for me, forsooth,
And such as me the world be made,
For me its glories all arrayed ?

“For since the world and life begun,
What poet’s measures have not run

Through all the strains of minstrelsy
In praise of me, and such as me?

“ For youth and beauty in their day
Have ruled the world and will for aye.
One, greatest of them all, has sung
In verse that through the world has rung.

“ And here’s my day to live and reign,
To take the joy and leave the pain
From this old world, that’s made for me,
For me, for me and such as me ! ”

Gay laughter rang through every word,
And yet beneath the laughter stirred

A something more than jesting play,—

Just sweet sixteen that very day,

She half believed in sober truth,

In the sweet insolence of youth,

That all for her, a foolish maid,

The world's gay glories were arrayed.

HE AND SHE.

I 'LL be at the window as he goes by,

As he goes by,—

He 'll lift his head to look at the sky,

The western sky,

To see if the sun has set for fair,—

And suddenly there

Against the sky in the golden air

He 'll see a pair

Of familiar eyes ; and I shall see

As he looks at me

A sudden smile and a nod, maybe ;

All this in three

Or perhaps in four swift moments — then,

Ah, then,

In another moment the world of men

For him, or, when

The street is turned, a different face

To take my place,

While I by my window here retrace

Each line of the face

Which smiled at me, as it passed me by

With a glance of the eye

That swept me in with the western sky,

The sunset sky.

To-morrow I shall be at the window when

He passes again ;

He will smile and nod — and then, ah then —

The same old story over again !

REPENTANT.

DAY after day, I look for and wait for
The glimpse of her figure, the sight of her
face ;

Day after day, too soon or too late for
Her going or coming, I trace and retrace,

With hope born anew, the ways that she
passes ;

With hope born anew, each morning I miss
her.

A winter of search, and now the young grasses
Are breaking the earth : shall I meet, shall I
kiss her

To-morrow, or next day? Oh, my little hurt darling,

Give me chance for a moment to comfort
and heal

The hurt that I gave you; just a moment, my
darling,

Let me look in your face, in your eyes, to
reveal

All my heart with its passion of love and its
sorrow,

Its grief and contrition, its pain for your
pain:

Ah, thus for a moment, to-day, or to-mor-
row,

To show her my heart — *to win her again!*

THE WRECK OF THE GLOUCESTER FISHING FLEET.

HINTS of the spring were in the air,
And March winds had a breath of May
That whispered hope and not despair,
The other day, the other day,

When came to us that dreadful tale
Of how the Gloucester fleet went down
In that wild February gale,
When we were safe within the town :

When we were safe and did not know,
That not for twenty years or more,

Had such a tempest come to blow

Across the cruel shoaling shore

Of George's Bank, as blew that day,

When high upon its treacherous tide

The Gloucester fleet at anchor lay

In all its comely strength and pride.

More than a hundred men went down —

The whole stanch fleet, with every sail, —

While we were safe within the town,

Sure they would weather every gale.

Perhaps we danced, perhaps we sung,

Without a hint of pain or death,

While they upon the rocks were flung,

Fighting for life with bated breath.

When, vanquished, they at length went down,
They must have thought in that despair
Of wife and child in Gloucester town,
And breathed for them one piteous prayer

Of wild appeal—for times were hard
Upon old Gloucester's sandy shore,
And men were scarce to watch and ward
And keep the wolf from out the door;

And now, and now! what would they do,
These wives and children in their strait?
Oh brave wrung hearts, if you but knew
How all New England, at your fate,

Sprung to its feet, stretched forth its hands,
To keep the wolf you dreaded so

From out your homes on Gloucester sands!

But ah, perhaps, if *we* could know,

You still keep watch and ward above

The cherished homes you left behind,

And read with eyes of clearer love

The meaning that to us is blind,

Of that dark day when you went down,

Off George's Bank, with every sail,

While we were safe within the town,

In that wild February gale.

THE REBEL FLOWER.

ACROSS the garden paths she led
Her Tory guest, with stately tread;
A Boston beauty in her prime,
With courage equal to the time
That tried men's souls, her loyal heart
Cried out against the craven part
It was her irksome fate to play
As courteous hostess on that day.

A gracious, gallant air he wore,
A gracious, gallant rank he bore,
This Tory guest, yet well she knew
Beneath the air, the rank, perdue,

A crafty treacherous purpose hid,
As poisons lurked beneath the lid
Of jeweled caskets long ago,
When every friend might prove a foe.

The garden beds were gay with bloom,—
Fair treasures which have given room
Long since at Fashion's stern decree
To splendors from across the sea.
For close beside the stately rose,
No tyranny can e'er depose,
The sturdy camomile did lift
Its myriad blossoms' snowy drift.

“What flower is this?” The Tory guest
Half paused to ask in idle quest.

A moment's thought, then sweet and clear,
"The Rebel flower, we call it here,"
She answered him, this Boston dame
Of lovely mien and rebel fame.
"How's this?" he laughed; and laughing
sent

A keen look at the fair face bent

In modest musing on the flower
She'd newly named within that hour.
"How's this, sweet dame, and why, pray tell,
So fair a flower a name so fell
Should win and wear?" A swift smile sped
Across her face, then slow she said,
"Because, my lord, this flower that's won
Your meed of praise, when trampled on,

Springs from the dust and thrives anew
In fresher vigor than it knew
Before such blows of fortune came,—
Thus rightly winning name and fame.”
“Ah, ha!” laughed out the Tory guest
At this bold speech, “a pretty jest
I’ faith, sweet dame, and bravely said.
When next we meet, perhaps a tread

Of weightier heels may have crushed out
These boasted claims, and put to rout
Your rebel flowers till name and fame
Are lost beneath the dust of shame.”
She laughed him back, with laughter born
Of gay disdain and sparkling scorn.
“When next we meet, my lord,” she said,
“This rebel flower will lift its head

In lustier vigor than before,
And name and fame for evermore
Shall flourish bravely in the land
Despite th' oppressors' heel or hand!"

When next they met, my lord had laid
His sword beneath the rebel blade,
And she who prophesied the fate
Of British valor, stood in state
On British soil, an honored guest,
Wearing upon her lovely breast,
In smiling triumph for that hour,
A posy called "The Rebel Flower!"

THE WAGER.

ONE by one they sped by us, their sails dripping wet,

For the heavens had opened their sluices of rain ;

And I sat in the bows of the little Coquette,
Scoring the time with Major Duane.

The wind was blowing from south and from east,—

A beautiful breeze just spoiled by the rain ;
And there I had bet twelve pairs at the least
Of “Couvoisier’s best” with this Major Duane :

Staked them all on that little Alarm, Florry dear,
Which had won me my gloves again and again,
If the sky had been decently sunny and clear,—
But my fate was to lose to this Major Duane !

And 'twas Harrison Blake who advised me to
stake

On the little Alarm, which but for the rain
Had won me my gloves ; though I never told
Blake

I was going to bet there with Major Duane.

Poor Harry ! he has always been jealous, you
know,

The whole summer through, of this Major
Duane ;

And now — well, it's queer how oddly things
go,

For the Major has won by this chance of the
rain

Something more than the gloves : for I staked
in a freak

My hand with the gloves, hardly thinking again
Of the matter, my dear, so swift went the week,
And so sure did I feel that this Major Duane

Would lose while I won. And now 'tis quite
clear

To *my* mind, at least, — that just for that rain
I could n't with honor refuse, Florry dear,
To pay up my debts to Major Duane.

IF I WERE YOU, SIR.

If I were you, sir,

I would not sue, sir,

For any woman's love day after day :

I'd never stand, sir,

At her command, sir,

Year in and out in this fond, foolish way.

Across my face, sir,

I'd have the grace, sir,

Or mother-wit, to pull a gayer mask,

And wait to find, sir,

What was her mind, sir,

Before I'd grovel at her feet to ask.

All very well, sir,
For you to tell, sir,
Of that grand poet in the olden time,
Whose fine advice, sir,
Was so concise, sir,
In that immortal strain of gallant rhyme.

It does not fit, sir,
Your case a bit, sir;
He never meant a man should pray and pray
With such an air, sir,
Of poor despair, sir,
For any woman's love day after day.

If you will read, sir,
The verse with heed, sir,

You'll see it runs as clearly as it may,
That every man, sir,
Should take his answer,
With manly courage, be it yea or nay.

Then cease your sighs, sir :
No man's a prize, sir,
In any woman's sight, just let me say,
Who 's not too high, sir,
To sigh and die, sir,
For any woman's love, day after day.

THREE DESTINIES.

THREE roses nod and talk
Across a garden walk ;
One, lifting up her head,
Clad all in damask red,
Cries gayly in her pride,
“ To-night, full far and wide,
My beauty shall be seen,
Adorning Beauty’s queen.”

“ And I,” the blush-rose cries,
“ Shall be the envied prize
A lover shall convey,
Before the end of day,

Unto a maiden fair,
And she will kiss and wear
My blushes in her breast :
There I shall sleep and rest."

"And I," the white rose sighs,—
"Before the sunshine dies,
I shall lie hid from sight
Within a grave's dark night ;
But not in vain my bloom,
If I have cheered the gloom,
Or helped to soothe and bless
A mourner's loneliness."

A DEUX TEMPS.

YES, this is our dance, this waltz from the
Duchess ;

What is that you are saying ? —

You thought I was playing
You false, with this waltz, this dance from the
Duchess ?

You thought I had rather be sitting and talk-
ing

With that little M'Manners
There, under the banners,
Or it may be, perhaps, in the corridors, walk-
ing,

Instead of remembering this dance here with
you, sir ;

This dance from the Duchess,

The lovely Grand Duchess,

The sweetest *deux temps*? Ah, if you but knew,
sir,

How I dote on the Duchess, with its gliding
and sliding

Soft measure for measure,

You'd know from such pleasure

My feet would never go straying or hiding.

What is that? You might have known it was
merely,

This special sweet measure,

The *dance*, not the pleasure
Of dancing with *you* here ? Well, really, you 've
nearly

Persuaded me, sir, that such *was* the reason ;
And I 'm sure I would fain, sir,
If you go on in this strain, sir,
Walk and talk with M'Manners to the end of
the season.

And to the end of my life, too, perhaps is my
meaning ?

Well, no ; for M'Manners
There under the banners,
Just when we encountered you waiting and lean-
ing

Against the bay-window, had confessed a relation

I guessed days ago —

His engagement, you know,

To that little — Now, Harry, *don't* kiss me
before all creation !

IN THE DARK.

THIS is my little sweetheart dead.

Blue were her eyes, and her cheek was red
And warm at my touch when I saw her last,
When she smiled on me and held me fast.

With the light, soft clasp of her slender hand ;
And now beside her I may stand and stand
Hour after hour, and no blush would rise
On her dead white cheek, and her shut blue
eyes

Will never unclose at my kiss or call.
If this is the end ; if this be all

That I am to know of this woman dear ;
If the beautiful spirit I knew, lies here,

With the beautiful body cold and still ;
If while I stand here now and thrill
With my yearning memories sore at heart
For a token or sign to rend apart

The pitiless veil, there is *nothing* beyond ;
If this woman, so fair, so fine, so fond
A week ago — fond, fine and fair
With the life, the soul that shone out there,

In her eyes, her voice, which made her in truth
The woman I loved ; if this woman forsooth
Is dead as this dead clay that lies
Under my gaze with close-shut eyes,

Then what is the meaning of life, when death
Can break it all, as breaks at a breath
The child's blown bubble afloat in the sun ?
What is the meaning, if all is done

When this breath goes out into empty air,
Like this childish plaything, flimsy and fair ?
What is the meaning of love's long pain,
The yearning memories that rend and strain

The living heart or the living soul,
If this is the end, if this is the whole
Of life and death, — this little span
That drops in the dark before the plan

Which the brain conceives is half complete,
Making life but the bubble's empty cheat ?

When, a year ago, through all the maze
Of speculation's far-hung haze,

I followed on with careless tread,
I had not looked then on my dead—
My dead so infinitely dear,
My dead that coldly lying here

Mocks my fond heart with semblance fair,
Chills me with measureless despair.

Then I could calmly measure fate
With Nature's laws, and speculate

On all the doubts that science brings;
Now, standing here, what is it springs
Within my soul, that makes despair
Not quite despair? O fond, O fair,

Oh, little sweetheart, dead to me,
Somewhere or other thou must wait for me,
Somewhere, somewhere, I shall not look in vain
To find thy living face, thy living love again.

IN EXTREMIS.

OH, my loveling, to shield you and cover you
From all the bleak winds that riot and rave,
To have and to hold you, to love and watch
over you, —

This is the boon of all others I crave.

Ah! is it God or blind Fate that denies me
This boon that alone can give value to life?
Ah! is it God or blind Fate that defies
me
To turn all your innocent days into strife?

Oh, innocent days, with never a blight there,

 Oh, innocent heart of my innocent dove,

God give me the grace, if He gives me no right

there,

To show her the best, not the worst, of my

love !

God give me the grace to give her, if need be,

 Only passionless peace, only tenderest care,

Through year after year, though agonies lead

me

Still year after year to the gates of despair.

Let me suffer alone the pangs of repression ;

 Let me conquer and die, if need for my

love,

Or conquer and live through the “clefts of
confession,”

While unconquered, unharmed, rests my in-
nocent dove.

PROPHECY.

I THOUGHT our olden friendship dead,
Or with the long years long since fled ;
Yet a sweet, faint ghost came back
Down the winding dizzy track,

As we met upon the street,
And a moment stopped to greet, —
Making some cool, common speech,
Just a moment, each to each ;

Knowing each how wide our ways
Led apart from those far days ;

How other hopes and plans came in,
With their promises, to win

Thought and soul and heart away
From the memories of that day.

Yet as there we met and talked,
As you turned, and, turning, walked

Down the street a pace or two,
Something cordial, old yet new,
Stirred within me sweet and faint,
Like a ghostly, sweet complaint ;

Something whispered me, and said :
“ All those years, so still and dead,
With a blessing shall come back
Down their winding dizzy track —

“ Like a friend, shall some time say :

‘ I am with you, though away,

And the love you thought so slight

And so poor a thing, shall light

“ ‘ All your life unto the end.’ ”

Thus my long-forgotten friend,

Or his soul, spoke unto me

In these words of prophecy.

TRANSFORMATION.

CLOUDS hung above the dusty street;
The sunless air was faint with heat;
The heavy odors were not sweet.

And heavy, heavy hung the day,
And life drooped dull with dull decay,
Beneath the clouds of sodden gray.

There was no beauty anywhere.
One could not pierce the dusty air.
The world seemed dim with drudging care:

Its wheels of traffic, greed, and gain,
Relentless over joy or pain,
Crushed close and fast, a strident strain

Of blatant noise, that filled the air,
The sunless, dreary, dusty air,
Till noise, and noise seemed everywhere;

And only noise, with nothing sweet
Through all the sunless heavy heat,
From end to end of all the street.

“Oh, dismal day, when will you go?
Oh, dreary day!” she cried; when lo,
The dreary day was all aglow!

Though clouds still hung in sunless air,
There was new beauty everywhere,
And slipped the world its cloak of care.

And wheels of traffic, greed, and gain
Rolled as before with strident strain,
Relentless over joy or pain.

But all at once, to music set,
She heard far off the clang and fret,
Or heard with ears that soon forgot.

What was it, was it changed the day
From drooping life and dull decay ?
What light across the dusty way

Shone suddenly so fair and free,
Made all the dismal shadows flee?
Oh, never yet on land or sea,

From any sky of any clime,
Rose that fair light, which old as Time,
Yet fresh as Nature in its prime,

Transfigures by its tender grace,
All in a moment's flying space,
Some sudden smile upon the face

We know and know not, till the day,
Transfigured, too, from dull decay,
Springs suddenly to blooming May.

APRIL WEATHER.

Oh, this April weather —

Breath of balm and snow,

June and March together

In an hour or so !

Something altogether

Charming in it, too ;

Not the worst of weather

When the sun shines through ;

Not the worst of weather,

Though a moment more,

Finds one's patience, rather

Like to run ashore.

Take it altogether,

Would I change it, though,

Miss this April weather,

Breath of balm and snow ?

Taken altogether,

It is dear to me,

This queer April weather,

For I seem to see,

Taken altogether,

It 's the counterpart,

This queer April weather,

Of — yourself, Sweetheart.

And taken altogether,
Would I change you, though,
Miss your April weather ?
Ah, no ! no !

AT IVRY.

AT Ivry, on that day,

On that day

When the king kept at bay,

By the magic of his sword

Never lowered,

All the rabble rebel horde,—

In the thickest of the fight,

Out of sight

All at once dropped the white

Flying plume that he wore.

Such a roar

Then arose, as they bore

Down the battle sodden plain,
Mid the slain,
Where the arrows fell like rain,
But suddenly just here,
Loud and clear,
At the very height of fear,
Cheer on cheer
Rose and rose, till the cry,
High and high,
Seemed to rend the very sky.
Then out streaming debonair
To the air
Flew the white plume of Navarre.
When the tide of battle turned,
And they learned
Whose valiant sword had spurned

The enemy's sharp blade

Ere it laid

In death's melancholy shade

The knight of Navarre,—

All the air

Once again resounded there

With their cheers' hearty ring.

But the king,

Through his tears, said faltering,—

“He gave his life for mine,

Poured the wine

Of that gallant blood, in fine,

At my feet, to repay, —

To repay,

As he swore, the debt of yesterday!”

ONLY A WEEK AGO.

ONLY a week ago the warmth and glow

Of sweetest summer time ;

Only a week ago the bud and blow

Of some fair tropic clime.

Only a week ago, and now the glow

Of fervid heat has turned

To wintry snow, and sharp winds blow

Where tropic splendors burned.

Only a week ago — ah, very low

My cherished buds are lying ;

So low, so low, I do not know
If they are dead or dying.

So low, so low, drenched all with mire and
snow,
Their beauty smirched with earth ;
So low, so low — only God's breath can blow
Them back to fresher birth.

YESTERDAY.

WHAT if but yesterday
I laughed and said him nay,
When here's to-day, to-day
To change my mind and say
A sweeter word than nay.

What if but yesterday
I told him that my nay
Could never turn to yea,
Though he should pray and pray
Forever and a day.

What if but yesterday
He swore he would obey
My cruel will, nor stay
To further sue or pray,—
Then strode in wrath away.

What if but yesterday
Like this he strode away,
When here 's to-day, to-day
For him to hear me say,—
“I love you, Love, to-day ! ”

THE MAID OF HONOR.

ACROSS the room where'er I turned,
Her mournful glances followed me
From day to day, with eyes that burned
In sad and splendid mystery ;

From day to day since first she came
A fugitive from that fair land
Of sunny France, when all its fame
Was shadowed by the mighty hand

Of the resistless German foe, —
A fugitive, yet sacred charge

From one who gave back blow for blow
Of German steel and charge for charge

Of German guns, until before
The fiery hail his gracious life
Went out for France, and with it bore,
Vain sacrifice of vainer strife,

His stainless name. The last of all
His noble race, did he divine
That from a stranger's alien wall
His fair ancestress' face would shine?

That glance for glance, she would return
My fascinated gaze, until
Behind the semblance seemed to burn
A spirit that might wake at will

Some moment into sudden speech ;
Some moment when the world at rest
In shrouding slumbers, she might reach
My waking ear — this silent guest,

Break from the bondage of her trance,
Slip softly from her painted screen
And speak to me of that fair France
When Marie Antoinette was Queen.

Day after day this fancy grew
Beneath the melancholy light
Of those dark eyes of Norman blue ;
Day after day, until a night

Of brooding storm, I woke and slept,
And woke again, to find the room

A blaze of light, wherein there stept
My Maid of Honor in her bloom

Of splendid youth, just as she stood
When Marie Antoinette was Queen,—
A living rose whose noble blood
Paid forfeit on the guillotine.

I held my breath, but not with fear—
My heart was beating with desire,—
When soft upon my listening ear
Her voice rose like a silver lyre:

“He was the last of all our race,
The last and best, who loved his kind
And gave his lifetime to efface
The trail of sin we’d left behind.

“ Favored of Heaven, we thought our class,

Set high above the common herd

Our ancient race — alas, alas,

When through our idle pleasures stirred

“ The boding breeze of discontent,

And men cried out against the laws,

We did not know then all it meant;

We did not know that in the jaws

“ Of blackest Hell we should be hurled

Just at our revel’s royal height ;

As through the streets our chariots whirled

We did not heed the threatening night.

“ But when beside the Queen I stood

That dreadful day and heard those cries

Of rage for blood, our hated blood,
Ring from the throng we dared despise,

“I saw the centuries roll back
Red with the wrongs that we had done,
And all along the lurid track,
As in a vision, one by one,

“The tyrant kings who had forsworn
Their oaths of fealty, broken faith
With France, and Frenchmen yet unborn,
Each branded with their country’s scathe,

“Rose up before me till appalled,
I shrank with horror and despair;
Then through the din a low voice called
Upon my name,—I turned and there

“ I saw the face of him, our knight,

Who made the glory of our name.

‘ Be patient, brave,’ he cried, ‘ the blight

Of centuries of sin and shame

“ In this dread hour begins to lift

Its sullen shade ; when time shall bring

Another cycle through the drift

Of burdened years, prelate and king

“ In this fair France shall have stept down

From off their thrones, have laid aside

Once and for all sceptre and crown,

While we who thought we vainly died

“ Shall watch the bravest and the best

The last of lordly lines expire,

And know at length God gives his rest
To souls long tried by flame and fire,

“‘ That with the debt of blood and race,
By blood and race at last repaid,
We expiate, by Heaven’s dear grace,
The sins by which we were betrayed.’ ”

Here suddenly, like music spent,
The sweet voice ceased, and all that bloom
Of youth and beauty that had lent
Such grace and glory to my room,

Faded and vanished from my gaze.
A moment more, and there, ah there,
Behind the portrait’s painted glaze
That face so radiantly fair

Looked down upon me as before.—

Was it a dream that she had stept
Just now across my chamber floor,

Was it a dream while I had slept?

KISS AND CURE.

SHE swung her gilded scissors to and fro,
And round and round her hand of rosy snow,
Or held them glittering like a lance at rest,
The time she spent in converse with her guest:
She swung them round and round and to and
 fro,
Until they pierced the hand of rosy snow,
Until they dipped their cruel tips within
The warm red blood beneath the tender skin.
She swung them down at that with half a cry,
And half a laugh that ended in a sigh.
And with an answering laugh in gayest jest,
He bent above the little hand and prest

A pitying kiss of playful tenderness
Upon the wound that flawed that loveliness
Of rosy snowy flesh with tiny brand,
“Thus let me kiss and cure the little hand,”
He gayly lightly cried ; but as he prest
Warm lips to warm sweet flesh, the idle jest
Suddenly to ardent earnest thrilled and beat
And brought an eager wooer to her feet.
The tiny wound he’d gallantly essayed
To kiss and cure, had in that moment made
A wider wound within the healer’s heart,
That must in turn be healed with cunning art.
And kneeling at her feet he urged his plea,—
“Be my physician, love, and heal for me
The greater wound this little wound has made,
Within my heart of hearts,” he fondly prayed.

A moment halting 'twixt a smile and frown
She left him in despair, then bending down,
Paid back the debt of healing with a sure
Swift touch — at which he cried: “to make the
cure

Entirely certain, love, I clearly see
There is no way now left for you and me
But to agree that while our lives endure
Each other's wounds like this, we'll kiss and
cure!”

BABY-MAY.

ONLY just the other day,
On the very first of May,
Nature had an opening
Of the treasures of the spring.

Apple-blossoms made a show
Like a shower of summer snow ;
Dandelions lifted up
Here and there a yellow cup.

Crocuses pushed through the mold
Little disks of burnished gold ;

And the violets, trimmed with dew,
Shivered in their cloaks of blue.

All the flowers had to tell
The adventures that befell,
In their journey back again
To the summer sun and rain.

At the last a gentle tone
Murmured softly, “I alone
Have had heavenly work to do;
For, when through the April dew

“I was hastening along,
Singing very low my song,
To my baby-buds of May,
Soft I heard an angel say:

“‘ Dear Arbutus, wait and take
Another baby in your wake,—
And deliver her with care
At a certain house and square,

“‘ I will whisper in your ear,
If you ’ll bend a moment here;—
Then perhaps for thanks and pay
They will name her, — Baby May.’ ”

BUNKER HILL IN 1875.

BEAT, beat, went the drums, and the fifers
played sweet,

To the tramp, tramp, tramp, of the forty thou-
sand feet

Of the twenty thousand soldiers, as they
marched all together,

North and south, south and north, in the sweet
summer weather.

Plumes playing in the air, and banners over-
head,

Blowing out to the breeze, blue and white,
white and red,

And every now and then, oh, the cheer and
the shout

That from the waiting throng over all the
drums rang out!

And southern soldiers' eyes how they brightened
with surprise,

As the shouting and the cheering rose up to
the skies!

"But how very queer to cheer," says curious
little Joe,

"And to celebrate a day when the British beat,
you know!"

Yes, the British beat at Bunker Hill, 't is very
true; but why?

Because the Yankee powder-horns, my little
Joe, went dry;

While Yankee courage on that day filled all
the land with wonder,

And lifted up the hearts of men to break their
bonds asunder.

So 't is Yankee pluck, my little Joe, we cele-
brate to-day,

With beating drums, and bugle notes, and ban-
ners floating gay.

Yet something more than Yankee pluck inspired
our wild huzzas,

As looking down the glittering line we saw the
Stripes and Stars

Wave gayly over North and South, as in the
summer weather

Like brothers on to Bunker Hill they took
their march together—

Like brothers, they who face to face so little
while ago

Met savagely on southern soil, as bitter foe to
foe.

Ah, child, if Bunker Hill before filled every
heart with wonder,

To-day, be sure, 't is doubly dear, when, all the
bonds asunder,

We clasp the hands that once were foes, and
in the summer weather

Bless God anew for Bunker Hill, that's brought
us all together.

THE WREN AND THE BOBOLINK.

A FABLE.

“CHERINK ! cherink !”

Sang the Bobolink.

“What do you think,

To my surprise,

With my two eyes

I saw last night ?”

“Ho, ho, ho, ho !”

Sang the Wren below,

“How should I know

What can surprise
Such wonderful eyes
So keen and bright?"

"Cherink ! cherink !"
Snapped the Bobolink.
"I know what you think.

That my wonderful eyes
Are far too wise
For a youth like me!"

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!"
Laughed the Wren below.
"If you're sure you know,
Mr. Bobolink,
Just what I think,
Why can't you see?" —

“Cherink ! cherink ! ”

Quick as a wink

Mr. Bobolink

Interrupted here,

As if he 'd a fear

That cunning Miss Wren,

With her little “ Ho, ho ! ”

Saw too much, you know,

From her branch below,

Of his frisky ways,

Through the summer days,

In his bachelor's den.

"

So soft and low

Rang the little “ Ho, ho ! ”

In the branch below,

At Bobolink's huff ;
It was fun enough
For little Miss Wren

To catch Bobolink,
All in a wink,
Before he could think,
In a box like this,—
Ah, a sly little miss
Was this Miss Wren.

For soft and low
Her little “ Ho, ho ! ”
Rang there below,
As if she could,
If she only would,
Tell, oh, *such* things

Of her neighbor's slips,
And frisky skips,
And sly little sips,
Not once in a way,
But every day,
At forbidden springs.

Precious few
Were the things she knew,
And all this ado
Was just to get
Bobolink in a pet
With her quizzical way,

Then fizz and flash,
For Robin was rash,
Out she knew would dash

As quick as a wink —

Ah, poor Bobolink,

All his secrets gay.

So sweet and low

Rings the little "Ho, ho!"

In the branch below,

At Bobolink's huff;

It is fun enough

For little Miss Wren

To catch Bobolink,

All in a wink,

Before he can think,

In a box like this, —

Ah, a sly little miss

Is this Miss Wren,

Wherever you find
Her crafty kind :
For it is n't confined
To the feathered side,
But far and wide
In the world of men

This little " Ho, ho ! "
Rings soft and low,
And before you know
Just what you 're about,
You are all found out
By some little Miss Wren,

Who, with cunning wit,
Has turned and hit
Your temper a bit,

And like poor Bobolink,
When you've time to think,
You find to your cost,

A little too late,
As you contemplate
Your foolish state
From day to day,
That nothing can pay
For a temper lost.

BOSTON BOYS.

GRANDFATHER'S STORY.

WHAT! you want to hear a story all about
that old-time glory,

When your grandsires fought for freedom
against the British crown;

When King George's red-coats mustered all
their forces, to be flustered

By our Yankee raw recruits, from each vil-
lage and each town;

And the very boys protested, when they thought
their rights molested.

My father used to tell us how the British
General stared
With a curious, dazed expression when the
youngsters in procession
Filed before him in a column, not a whit
put out or scared.

Then the leader told his story, — told the
haughty, handsome Tory
How his troops there, on the mall there
(what you call “the Common,” dears),
All the winter through had vexed them, med-
dled with them, and perplexed them,
Flinging back to their remonstrance, only
laughter, threats, and sneers.

“What!” the General cried in wonder,— and
his tones were tones of thunder,—

“Are these the rebel lessons that your fa-
thers taught you, pray?

Did they send such lads as you here, to make
such bold ado here,

And flout King George’s officers upon the
King’s highway?”

Up the little leader started, while heat light-
ning flashed and darted

From his blue eyes, as he answered, stout
of voice, with all his might:

“No one taught us, let me say, sir,— no one
sent us here to-day, sir;

But we ’re Yankees, Yankees, Yankees, and
we know that we are right!

" And your soldiers at the first, sir, on the
mall there, did their worst, sir ;

Pulled our snow hills down we'd built there,
broke the ice upon our pond.

' Help it, help it if you can, then ! ' back they
answered every man then,

When we asked them, sir, to quit it ; and
we said, ' This goes beyond

" " Soldiers' rights or soldiers' orders, for we've
kept within our borders

To the south'ard of the mall there, where
we've always had our play ! ' " —

" Where you always shall hereafter, undisturbed
by threats or laughter

From my officers or soldiers. Go, my brave
boys, from this day

“Troops of mine shall never harm you, never
trouble or alarm you,”

Suddenly the British Gen’ral, moved with
admiration, cried.

In a minute caps were swinging, five and
twenty voices ringing

In a shout and cheer that summoned every
neighbor far and wide.

And these neighbors told the story how the
haughty, handsome Tory,

Bowing, smiling, hat in hand there, faced
the little rebel band;

How he said, just then and after, half in earnest,
half in laughter:

“So it seems the very children strike for
freedom in this land!”

So I tell you now the story all about that old-time glory,

As my father's father told it long and long ago to me ;

How they met and had it out there, what he called their bloodless bout there ;

How he felt — “ What ! was he there, then ? ” Why, the *leader*, that was he !

A LITTLE GIRL'S WONDER.

WHAT do the birds say, I wonder, I wonder,
With their chitter and chatter? It is n't all
play.
Do they scold, do they fret at some boggle or
blunder,
As we fret, as we scold, day after day?

Do their hearts ever ache, I wonder, I wonder,
At anything else than the danger that comes
When some enemy threatens them over or
under
The great, leafy boughs of their great, leafy
homies?

Do they vow to be friends, I wonder, I wonder,
With promises fair and promises sweet,
Then, quick as a wink, at a word fall asunder,
As human friends do, in a moment of heat?

But day after day I may wonder and wonder,
And ask them no end of such questions as
these,—

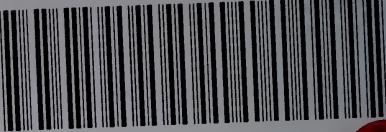
With chitter, and chatter, now over, now under,
The big, leafy boughs of the big, leafy trees,

They dart and they skim, with their bills full
of plunder,

But never a word of an answer they give,
And never a word shall I get, though I wonder
From morning till night, as long as I live.



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